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INAUGURAL

RAYMOND A. SPRUANCE

LECTURE

By

Mr. Herman Wouk

SPRUANCE HALL

U.S. NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner

Mrs. Spruance, Senator Pell, Secretary Warner, Admiral Morison, ladies and gentlemen, good evening and welcome. Welcome to the first event in Spruance Hall. Tomorrow morning we will formally dedicate this magnificent auditorium, which is named for Admiral Raymond Spruance, one of our most gallant heroes in World War II. We will have more to say of him at that time. Tonight, though, we are so grateful and so pleased to have Mrs. Raymond Spruance with us in our auditorium.

Tonight we inaugurate an annual lecture series which will also bear the name of Admiral Spruance. It is our intent to invite to our campus each year a distinguished speaker, whose address would be one of the highlights of our academic program. We are pleased this year to welcome members of the other universities in our area and the friends and many benefactors of the Naval War College. Tonight I would like to particularly acknowledge my gratitude to Rear Admiral Richard Bates, the President of the Naval War College Foundation, which has generously sponsored this leadership. It has done so with the generous help of the Harry Freund Memorial Foundation and Mrs. Lucius T. Ordway.

Tonight, we are more pleased than I can possibly say to welcome Mr. Herman Wouk as the first Raymond Spruance lecturer. Mr. Wouk was asked for this lecture because of his special qualifications both for this particular series and for this place. If our first criterion for our speaker was that he be distinguished, we could not have done more than ask a Pulitzer Prize winner who has authored ten books, the last of which has been on the top of our nations best seller list for over a year. Beyond that, Mr. Wouk is a Navy man through and through. He joined the Navy shortly after Pearl Harbor. He served throughout World War II in destroyers and minesweepers; he started as a junior communications officer and he worked his way up to Executive Officer.

The war came to an end before he had opportunity for a command of his own, but we all know from writings such as The Caine Mutiny that he clearly discerns those qualities so essential to being a Commanding Officer. The first, of course, was the ability to keep track of the ships valuables, like strawberries, and second was the ability to keep a hand on any number of things, like three steel balls. Seriously, Mr. Wouk clearly understands men who go down to the sea in ships, and he understands them to a depth which makes his Willie Keiths,

his Philip Queeg's and his Victor Henry's more than just plausible fictional characters wrapped in blue uniforms. Beyond this, my personal admiration for Mr. Wouk comes also from his latest novel, The Winds of War, in which he deals most cogently with the deep and the broad issues of strategy. There are few novels that I have read with a pencil in hand, to underline varieties to be remembered. The Winds of War is a textbook on the causes of war. We all look forward with great expectations to the second volume of this work in which he will, I'm sure, discuss the conduct of World War II, including the role of Admiral Spruance.

Mr. Wouk's lecture tonight is entitled, "The Naval Officer in an Age of Revolution". He, being a consummate and compassionate artist, is a man who knows whereof he speaks when he speaks of naval officers. He, being a master strategist, is a man who know whereof he speaks, when he speaks of the place of naval officers in these revolutionary times.

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I ask Mr. Herman Wouk to take the podium and to deliver the first Raymond Spruance lecture.

Mr. Wouk:

In greeting the many distinguished guests who are here tonight, I want to say a word of special greetings to a man without whose work neither I, nor anybody who writes on World War II, would be able to function. I am proud that among those present is the great historian Samuel Eliot Morison.

There is already a wisp of revolution in the air when the author of The Caine Mutiny and the inventor of Captain Queeg addresses the Naval War College. 'Twas not ever thus. There are many of you who remember that when The Caine Mutiny was first published, the Navy took awhile to make up its mind about just how it felt toward this work which casts a very oblique light, to say the least, on the Navy's image of its own protectiveness.

The turning point came about six months after publication, at a dinner where the then Chief of Naval Operations, I think it was Admiral Fechteler spoke. Afterwards there was a question and answer period. Some brave soul raised his hand and said, "Admiral, have you read this novel The Caine Mutiny, and, if so, what do you think of it?" Well, I'm told there was a long silence after which he said, "Yes, I have read that interesting tome. And in a long Naval career I would say that I have met all those sons of bitches, but never all on one ship." After that it was all right to talk about The Caine Mutiny in open Naval society.

Lingering resentments may still be felt about a statement attributed to me that has passed into folklore. That is the statement that "the Navy is a master plan designed by geniuses for execution by idiots". I protest that I never said this--one of the characters in my book said this. I assure you that beyond a certain point one has very little control over what these characters come out with. Even if you have some lingering doubts about that, you and I should get along famously this evening, because here at the Naval War College clearly I am addressing only the geniuses.

This is a damn serious matter--the place of the Naval officer in an age of revolution. I am thinking not only of the recent roiling events that trouble you all, and troubled the Secretary of the Navy when I flew up with him today. These are what Admiral Turner has just called the "surface waves" of a seismic upheaval in our times. It has reached into the Navy and affects the destiny, not only of our Naval officers but of our country.

I will speak very seriously in clearing the grounds to get to the point, the heart of what I consider the predicament of the Naval officer. I may run through some academic common-places for certain educated members of the faculty. Bear with me and let us get to it.

Revolution, to begin with, is a word toward which we Americans have an ambivalent, one might say almost a schizophrenic, feeling because we are pointing toward a celebration four years hence of the founding of our country with an overthrow--a revolution. Our most conservative and well-born ladies proudly called themselves the Daughters of the American Revolution. We had our secret movements in that Revolution. We had the Boston Tea Party which was a violent confrontation, an illegal incursion, and an unlawful destruction of property like the invasion of a building by students and the burning of the Dean's records. We recall as martyrs the victims of the Boston Massacre. A frightened and embattled militia confronting a mob shot over their heads and killed a few people, if you will, a Kent State shooting. Nevertheless, this is our storybook revolution safely enshrined in the past. We scarcely think of it in these contemporary terms.

In contemporary terms, when we talk about revolution, we are talking about socialism or communism. These are shading and intertwining terms which I will not quibble over tonight. We call, depending upon how we feel about them, the Russians Communists or Bolshevik's or Bolos or Reds. They call themselves the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I shall, throughout here, in speaking of the main revolutionary currents in our world, speak of socialism, socialism in its origin, and in its essence and in the currents that have swept into our own lives as a new way of looking at the world and human destiny. It poses a stark, brutal question. Who get, how much, and why? Who gets how much--how much of the natural wealth and the product of the community's labor, and why? This is a shocker. To ask the question is already to be driving to the roots of what we have considered for hundreds and hundreds of years, for many generations, as civilized society.

John Locke was the British philosopher from whose ideas this country, or at least its founding fathers, largely built our philosophical underpinnings. John Locke said that government exists for the protection of property, a stock definition. He elaborated and said he extended property to include the life and liberty of every individual as part of property. But said he, "government is instituted by men and exists for the protection and preservation of property." He said this at the end of the 17th century. Early in the 19th century one of the key important thinkers of the then just burgeoning socialist movement Joseph Pierre Proudhon, the Frenchman

said in a ringing few words that became a toxin of world revolution. "Property is theft." What happened between the end of the 17th century and the 1830's that such a gap could open between two serious first-class minds as in Locke and Proudhon? The answer is summed up in a few words that are banality, but they represent a terribly heavy fact of our lives--the Industrial Revolution. There was this this movement of many inventions and knowledge, never mind for the moment how or why. I will not trace the Industrial Revolution, I assume that you know of it. Two things which resulted from it, are of the greatest consequence. Things that had been lying in the ground for thousands of years useless and unwanted, became very precious sources of energy and therefore of wealth. Machines were created that multiplied fantastically the power of a single man's daily labor, the result being an enormous increase of net wealth in civilized society. But all this wealth was controlled and divvied up under old rules so that if some simple minded sop, who happens to be the son or the grandson or the great-grandson of a lord who had been granted by le roi the King or the Czar a thousand square miles of land, well then, by the law of properties, and therefore with the sanction of government, as Locke understood it, this empty sop was entitled to live his life out in corrupt luxury, while the thousands of people who lived on his land and worked it stayed at the starvation level. And if a man with some enterprise and a little money could buy machines, he could engage laborers to work those machines and produce a hundred, two hundred times what they could do with their bare hands, pay them what they got paid working with their bare hands, and keep the extra wealth that they had produced because the machines were his. This went on not too long before the socialist movement sprang up, not in one place. It murmured up out of the ground all over Europe where the Industrial Revolution was taking hold and the brutal question began to be murmured and then spoken in the streets. Who gets how much and why? If the answer is: everyone gets what he gets and it's right because it's his property, then said Proudhon, "Property is theft." And there was so much human truth in this that socialism burgeoned through the crises of the 19th century, 1830, 1848, the Paris Commune of 1870, always growing until it became a secular Islam that had swept across the earth.

Question: Why did it not take hold here in the United States? Where is socialism here in the United States, at the cutting edge of the Industrial Revolution from 1800 onward? Here as in no other country it has barely taken hold and still is not a respectable way to think. Turn to Locke again. He says an extraordinary thing in discussing his definition of property. He says "Once all the world was America." And what he means is that once the world was a limitless virgin wilderness with enough land for everybody for the taking. It was

at the end of the 17th century when he wrote. That was still true of the United States and it went on being true into our time.

My mother-in-law was born in Indian territory. My father came here as a boy of 17 in 1905 from Russia, a penniless immigrant and did work up to become the manager of a large laundry in New York. He sent me and my brother and my sister to college. My brother became an electrical engineer and worked on the atom bomb. These things have been possible right up to the present hour and so the answer in the United States has been who gets how much, and why? Every man gets what he goes out and earns with his energy and his wit and his devoted labor, because there's enough for all. If it was true that in Europe and elsewhere there were ancient titles that squeezed out those who did not own, so that the only way they could was by the overthrow of the system, property was theft. This cry of hate of a system was so unjust. It was not true here in the United States. But this statement of American definition of who gets how much, and why, which you just applauded has come perilously close to not working in the panic that has swept this country sometimes, and does not yet work for some Americans. More importantly, it does not work for a growing number of groups of Americans and there we begin to come to grips with our problem.

I grew up in the great depression and when I went to college, we had student riots. We had communist cells on all the important campuses which we don't have today. We didn't have the anarchic movement of the new left, but we had communist cells. The only really fashionable intellectual stance in the 1930's was communistic. That passed, but it happened. And today with the country torn by dissatisfactions and the tragedies of the Vietnam War and with the race question we begin to hear these murmurs again. They are not murmurs without means.

This country was torn by a great war to correct a great crime. The black man was dragged here. He did not come like my father to make his way in golden America. He came here in chains and much white American blood was shed to strike off those chains. In the naivete of our people we thought that striking off chains was enough. But in industrial society it was not enough--there was no way in.

Eight years after the end of the Civil War the second World War came to an end and almost a million black boys had gone out and fought. They had the G.I. Bill of Rights and if they did not want to go to college, they would not go back to the shanty towns, to put it bluntly the nigger towns, because they had fought by our side. Their challenge was real, it was based on facts. I know about the excesses. I know about the

anarchic voices of the neurotic and the self-seeking activists; but they function and they have impact only when they work with something that is really on the move. I'm almost done with this topic because I want to move on to a revolution that strikes yet more closely to the specific predicaments of the American Naval officer. But to sum up on this topic of socialism as the root of revolution outside our blessed land and of the current inside our land, we have to recognize that it is not the voice of the devil but a human response to things that have gone wrong. What follows from this is, I think, that the strategy of this country and the national security rests not on ideological choices of good guys and bad guys, who are not socialists, but first of all on what is good and necessary for the United States and secondly judging each situation as it occurs in terms of the security of the United States. And that is why the policy of President Nixon's, in going to China, and I speak as a life long Democrat, alas, that the policy of the President's has won universal approval and marked the turning point in history. It is a turning away from the ideological black and white to doing the things that have to be done to keep this country secure and safe first of all. And it follows that this means that our strategic thinking broadens out beyond the cold war straight jacket. And it means that whenever we think about these currents as they sweep into our own circle, we think in terms of the reality and we think with human sympathy with depth and breadth and remembrance that this did not happen three weeks ago on the Kitty Hawk, it happened 200 years ago on nameless slave ships. We are seeing the end of something that began there. It is not something beyond cure. The great virtue of the American system is its perpetual progress and self-curing. If it's necessary for me to run up my colors, let me do so and then proceed to this deeper revolution.

It is my feeling that the first value in human existence is freedom, and that this equality which is the whole goal of socialism can be achieved under freedom. We have not done it, we are moving toward it, but we are moving toward it in freedom. Any Russian will say to you, any thinking Russian will say to you when you talk this way, freedom for what, freedom to starve? It is a thrusting question as long as anybody starves. Put an animal in a cage and feed him regularly, then open the cage and he will get out and run because deepest in all of us is the urge to freedom. Those who agitate for socialism in this country have never known what it is to be without freedom and God grant that they never know. To many of our young people these statements that you applaud and I say have yet to be proved and validated by events.

Now let me talk about something else entirely, something more serious. And here I think I go into the hearts of many of you. There is a revolution of man's way of looking at

himself and that revolution is going forward tonight as I speak down at Cape Canaveral. Three Americans with God's blessings and grace are going to fly to the moon perhaps for the last time in our century. This event, which none of us have wholly digested--this travelling of men to the moon--is an epitome of an event that has happened in our time in this century, which has nothing to do with socialism. But this poses a more radical challenge yet. There is a perception growing all over the world that we live on a tiny ball lost in space. That our quarrels, the pathetic yammerings of children are international crises. As one astronaut has said, "When I flew around the world 151 times, I saw no national boundaries. I saw one world where one kind of man lives. Man! From out there, there are no maps where the United States is green and Mexico is brown and the Soviet Union is red and China is black. There are no such colors. It's a beautiful little water-girded ball." We are all dwellers on it together of if you will, voyagers, prisoners on it together inextricably bound up with each other. And for us to go on fighting or for us to go on piling up armaments, fruits of this Industrial Revolution which have now reached such awesome, staggering, technological proportion, to go on piling these weapons to the sky and sending them down to the depths of the sea despite the candid young spirit whom you have to appeal to come into the Navy and strike all the spirits too. And the deepest of absurdities, the wildest of paradoxes is, I sometimes suspect, that the most deeply anti-war American is the Commander of a nuclear submarine, because I can only dimly picture what it is like to be down there in the depths of the sea waiting for that order to fire because his nationality, whatever that is, is different from some other nationality. And this small ball which he may be ordered to poison with his own command.

This is very rough, to cut to the heart of the military identity. It did not just begin, it started when Magellan circled the globe and Galileo saw the mountains of the moon. A short time ago, as men's history is recounted, but in these 400 years we have seen first of all that we do live on a ball. Second, that the others are dead, and finally with our machines we are making it smaller and smaller so that one of us can reach out and touch all the others, either in friendship or in hate and death, and we say to each other perhaps as another astronaut. One of them said, "When I was out there in deep space and looked back on the earth, I suddenly stopped feeling like an American. My identity dissolved, and I was a human being." That's a radical challenge to what everybody in this room thinks and is dedicated to. Yet it is the truth, but there is another truth that lies under it and it is the core of what I have to say to you. If he was out in deep space, he got out there as an American because it was the United States and its free enterprise and its use of the industrial

system and only the United States Navy. I say these things in no narrow chauvinism or even service loyalty. I think this points to a fact that we must understand and not be ashamed of, and which must guide us in thinking of the military destiny.

The moon shots, whatever one may say about the romantic waste, proves as nothing else could that, in the industrial age which socialism has come to solve, in the industrial age freedom works better than anything else. Therefore, pragmatically, it is worth saving and fighting for if it has to be fought for.

I think of socialism, my friends, as a state of pre-freedom. It may well be that the ancient inequities in the world such as in silent Russia and in corrupt imperialist China required a state of socialism, for we are not moving toward them. The whole tendency of history is a progress toward liberty. I believe they are moving toward us and that it is worthwhile preserving the citadel of freedom here while man moves up toward freedom.

Moreover, nationalism creates the tensions and the dangers that we've spoken of. There are things about nationalism that we cannot easily give up. In a way it is a natural human reaction to the threatened homogenization of the industrial age which threatens to reduce us to all one thing, dressed all one way, thinking all one set of thoughts. It is a human retreat to what father taught you, to the things that you hold dear and that which are familiar, even as the machines swarm through the skies. It is an attempt to hold on to the precious heritage that has come up through a hundred languages and a hundred cultures. If nationalism's gone cancerous as in Nazi Germany, creates great dangers for the world, nationalism is also a source of culture and beauty and a pride in which there is nothing wrong. There is one symbol in the United States Navy regulations which I think is the essence of how we must think of this. When there are divine services aboard, the flag denoting the divine service flies above the national flag. As we move toward a universal freedom and toward a universal appreciation of where we stand in God's world, lost out here in the stars, one human brotherhood, then I think we will come to this proper relationship of nationalism to God--not the erasing of it but nationalism and many nations and diverse cultures under God.

I want to come close to the conclusion with a passage written by the Soviet Russian novelist, Solzhenitsyn, in his new book August 1914. The battle of Tannenberg has occurred; the army is fleeing rapidly. A nameless anonymous Colonel finds himself, more or less by accident, near the front and tries to rally round a few officers to gather up with their

men and hold a gap, a torn gap for twenty-four hours so that the bulk of many divisions can escape. It's a suicide mission. In a few sentences he attempts to explain to these two Lieutenant Colonels and to half the surviving company commanders the situation of the town, the situation of the army, the fact that their regimental commander had abandoned them and run back to Russia along with the remaining companies of their regiment, and the job that he wanted the rest of them to do. As he spoke, he looked into their faces and saw, as though in his own features that fundamentally they all bore the indelible impress of a similar background; army tradition, long spells of garrison service in a world isolated from the rest of society, a sense of alienation, of being despised by that society and ridiculed by liberal writers. The official ban on discussing politics and political literature resulting in a blunting or stultifying self-defying of the intellect, the permanent shortage of money. And yet despite it all, the knowledge that they represented in purified and concentrated form the vitality and the courage of the whole nation. Now was the moment they had lived for and Voritynzaf had no doubt what their answer would be. I tell you, as the creator of Victor Henry in a different book, when I came up on this passage, in a book written by a communist author (and Solzshenitsyn for all his moments of rebellion he is a communist and says he is.) When I came on that passage I felt as though an astronomer might when looking out at a distant galaxy, and seeing winking Morse Code in plain language. "Hello out there." There is a human brotherhood in this awareness, bridging socialism and the American system, of what the military life is.

Mrs. Spruance, I regard Raymond Spruance not only as a great sea fighter, but as one of the great Americans of our history. He avoided the limelight successfully. His measure has yet to be taken by history. The dedication of this splendid hall is a worthy step toward that recognition which will be a very long time in coming. But I want to remind you, my friends, and fellow officers what it was that Raymond Spruance did at Midway on 24 hours notice. This blackshoe took command of a carrier task group, went out to sea with another man's staff, and fought a revolutionary type of warfare that had never been fought before. He fought it against overwhelming odds and won, and in that victory a great turning point of the hurricane of the Second World War. In that victory he gave freedom one more chance for one more generation. That, I submit to you, remains the task of the military officer, of the Naval officer, in an age of revolution. Not to solve these ongoing problems, nor to despair at that immensity and complexity outside our country and inside, but to stand and serve. To improvise; to fight wars that have never been fought; wars in which one

wins by never having a weapon shot off; fighting against the overwhelming odds of political destruction within and without and all the odds of events almost outside human control. And with this fight and with this service to give freedom one more chance for one more generation and I say to you let the heathen rave. This is as noble a calling as any man can be called on to dispatch on this beautiful and still so very imperfect earth. Thank you.